

**Minutes of the Southern Utah Veterans Home-Ivins,
Advisory Board Meeting,
November 2, 2017**

In Attendance: Terry Dunne (Chairman), Jeff McKenna (Board Member), Janet Warner (Board Member), Leona Marck (Resident Board Member), Barbara Holck (Board Member), Tony Moore (State Officer), Jerry Olson (Nursing Home Administrator), Gary Harter (UDVMA Executive Director), Dennis McFall (UDVMA Deputy Director)

Excused: Board Member Roger Tracy

Meeting called to order by Chairman Dunne at 4:00 pm and all present were welcomed. We then offered the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Chairman Dunne.

1. Minutes of July 13, 2017 meeting referenced for individual read and all board members should have received them via email. Chairman Dunne noted that there was one error in the meeting minutes, item 9 should read "Board Member Hart" vice "Board Member Hard". Board Member Warner motioned to approve the July 2017 Meeting Minutes, seconded by Board Member Holck, motion passed unanimously.
2. Administrator Olson provided the following:
 - a. Administrator Olson stated that he was grateful to be in attendance and to have the opportunity to serve veterans in his role.
 - b. VA Survey was conducted 17-19 October. This is an annual inspection from the Veterans Administration (VA) that is unannounced in the month of October. The results of the survey were very good as there were no citations. This is the 3rd year in a row that the SUVH has had no citations. Director Harter asked if there were any lessons learned from the survey that could benefit the other Veteran Homes in Utah. Administrator Olson replied that resident falls was a topic that was intensely reviewed by the survey team and stated that we have a high rate of falls at the facility compared to any grouping (veteran homes or private nursing homes). Administrator Olson stated that he believes that 2 factors affect the fall rate at this facility. First, the size of the facility is large compared to most other facilities with over 100,000 square feet and all private rooms. Second, the veteran population is predominately men compared to most nursing homes and veterans tend to be strong and independent and they sometimes resist the need to ask for help. This information was shared with the Veterans home in Payson since the two facilities are almost identical. Deputy Director McFall asked how the fall rates compared between the 2 facilities and Administrator Olson replied that they are almost the same. Board Member Holck asked how falls were tracked and reported and asked for a comparison. Administrator Olson replied that we track falls in many categories, by time of day, community location, etc. and that by quality measures, this facility would be in the 90th percentile. Director Harter asked if we still addressed falls in our daily morning meetings to which

Administrator Olson replied that yes, falls are a daily topic of discussion. Additionally, per policy, each fall is recorded via incident report and an investigation is done for each fall with root cause analysis and corrective action among the interdisciplinary team members to address changes in an attempt to reduce the chance or prevent future potential falls. Board Member Holck asked if the falls rate has been high since the facility has been opened to which Administrator Olson replied yes that it has been high from the beginning, but that the rate of falls has decreased within this facility over time. The staff recently participated in a 6 month falls collaborative led by the Veterans Administration which was found to be useful although specific data related to falls and fall rates was not readily available.

- c. Administrator Olson mentioned that a new set of CMS Nursing Home regulations are going into effect on 28 November, 2017 that are making numerous changes. Chairman Dunne asked if the facility was aware of what all the changes were to which Administrator Olson replied that he has copies of all the new regulations and that he has begun training the staff on the changes and the policy changes needed to meet the new regulations. Additionally, Avalon corporate offices have been assisting in ensuring that the facility is prepared to implement the new requirements.
- d. Administrator Olson discussed the facilities emergency preparedness plans which is an ongoing improvement effort. A vulnerability analysis was recently completed which found the top risks to our facility and residents are; 1) Heat (including power outages); 2) Earthquake; 3) Pandemic or an epidemic; and 4) Elopement or missing resident. The facilities emergency plans include an onsite emergency diesel generator which could probably keep essential functions, including air conditioning, operating for about 3 days. The facility has transfer agreements, if evacuation were necessary, with Dixie Regional Medical Center, nursing homes in Washington and Iron Counties, as well as all Avalon operated nursing homes. Additionally, these transfer agreements were strengthened to include sharing of resources if necessary (food, water, medications, and transportation). Deputy Director McFall asked which facilities we had agreements with to which Administrator Olson replied Bella Terra, Red Cliffs Regional, Seasons Health Care, and Bella Terra in Cedar City. Board Member Holck asked how that would work to which Administrator Olson replied that since we are always full, we would need to get some type of temporary waiver to accept additional residents either in our Multi-purpose room or doubling occupancy in resident rooms. We have a very modern and robust fire detection and suppression system that could partition the building in case of a fire which would potentially allow portions of the building to remain operational. Further, we have an agreement with Rocky Vista University if evacuation were necessary from this facility, which would probably be more of a safe staging area while more semi-permanent transfer plans were made. Chairman Dunne asked how long it would take to evacuate the building in case of a fire to which

Administrator Olson replied that it would depend on the severity, but not long. He also mentioned that we are thinking about conducting an emergency drill in the future to test evacuation procedures and time but that it wouldn't involve residents, only actors, perhaps students. Chairman Dunne asked if there were a major area catastrophe (i.e. earthquake) and employees were not able to come to work, is there something in place to help evacuate or meet other needs to which Administrator Olson replied that we have a policy to allow volunteers to help and we think we would have many people willing to help in the community. Additionally, we are putting together "go-bags", one for each resident, so that each resident would have a limited amount of essentials specific to them in case of an emergency.

- e. The State has provided each Veterans Home a Satellite phone in case of an emergency where normal communications are unavailable.
- f. Director Harter asked how the most recent Pinnacle Report compared to the past to which Administrator Olson replied that the results are close to the same. 14 of 16 areas are rated "best in class" (top 15%). He also explained that Avalon pays an outside survey company (Pinnacle) to provide a monthly report to the facility. The data surveyed is taken monthly on about 10% of the resident population (including family members) randomly distributed to include samples from new admissions, recent discharges, and long-term residents. Pinnacle provides good customer service feedback since they have a national database of roughly 1000 nursing homes participating. Board Member Holck asked to review a recent Pinnacle report which will be included along with these minutes prior to the next board meeting.
- g. Chairman Dunne asked about recording any testimonials from residents for use as feedback as well as possible marketing products as brought up by Mayor Hart during the July, 2017 board meeting to which Administrator Olson replied not yet, but that he is still working toward find a volunteer who would take on the responsibility to learn a method to do so and teach that method to family members of residents. The facility will be getting a new Recreation Director on 13 November who will take on this project as volunteers fall under the Recreation Department.
- h. Deputy Director McFall asked if we are having any problems hiring or retaining CNA's to which Administrator Olson replied that we always have that problem, and we always solve it. Director Harter commented that Administrator Olson had put a lot of effort into hiring and retaining good staff, especially CNA's, and asked if it had gotten better or worse over the last year or so to which Administrator Olson replied that we've been able to manage it by the multiple items he and Avalon have put into place to address this issue. He mentioned that Avalon has retained a CNA instructor who will teach a CNA course 1-2 times per year at the facility and that the facilities Marketing Director focuses on all the local schools who produce CNA's to ensure maximum exposure for students to apply here. Additionally, the facility offers a \$1000.00 sign-on bonus for CNA's

and a \$3000.00 sign-on bonus for nurses. The facility also implemented targeted pay raises for CNA's and nurses this past year as well as Avalon's newly implemented matching 401k bonus for all employees. Board Member Holck asked about how the funding works at the facility to which Deputy Director McFall replied that the state bills the VA monthly for each day a qualifying veteran stays in the facility and then passes those funds to Avalon less a small hold-back fee used for building depreciation, improvements, replacement of assets, ect. Avalon bills directly to CMS, other insurance, and private pay portions. The contract to run the facility is a 5 year contract and the current contract ends next year.

- i. Board Member Holck asked what keeps the facility from going to semi-private rooms to which the State Officer replied that we don't have a license for that. The VA also limits the number of beds each state is allowed to bill for per diem reimbursement and Utah is currently above the maximum number of beds allowed but has a waiver in place to allow the number we have in the state between the 4 Veteran Homes. Additionally, this facility was built with the approved VA state nursing home model which focused on "home-like" atmosphere and single occupancy rooms.
3. State Officer Report (Tony Moore):
 - a. The State Officer discussed the first annual Southern Utah Veterans Home Golf Tournament which will be held at the Sun River Golf Course on Friday 3 November, 2017. We have roughly 104 players signed up to play and about 10 hole sponsorships so the tournament is financially viable. There are a number of prizes available. Board Member Holck asked if the money is discretionary or what it was earmarked for to which the State Officer replied that we have partnered with the American Legion and it hasn't been decided. The tournament wasn't intended to be a fund raiser and that there shouldn't be a lot of money left over (i.e. less than \$1000.00).
 4. Resident Report (Board Member Marck): The different events since the last board meeting were provided on an events page in the meeting packet.
 - a. Past Events: July 19th – Rocky Vista University Talent Show; August 2nd - Mrs. Brittany Hollinshead (Mrs. Utah 2017) visit; September 23rd – Resident Luau; October 31st – Spooktacular.
 - b. Future Events: November 11th – Stan Snow Veterans Day 5k run/1 Mile walk; November 13th – Veterans Day Program; November 15th & 16th – Thanksgiving Dinner with Guests; TBD December – Sub-For-Santa.
 - c. Board Member Marck mentioned that the Resident Council recently purchased a new exercise machine and that it is easy to use and getting lots of use.
 - d. Chairman Dunne asked if there was going to be any participation from the Southern Utah Veterans Home in the Veterans Day Parade on Friday November 10th to which State Officer Moore replied yes, one resident with be a Grand

Marshall for the parade and the facility will also have one of our vehicles driving in the parade. Administrator Olson added that the facilities goal is to participate in every community parade if possible.

5. Utah Department of Veterans & Military Affairs Update (Director Harter):

- a. Deputy Director McFall stated that each of the 4 Veteran Homes are doing very well and that we have been able to maintain 98-100% occupancy and that each home has a waiting list. Two of the four Veteran Homes operational contracts will expire on May 1st 2018 and the state bidding process is underway for both facilities for new contracts. Generally speaking, a request for proposal is announced and contractors are able to bid on running the facility for a 5-year period, bids are received and an independent selection committee will review and rate the bids and a decision will be made on which company will be awarded the new contract.
- b. The department is looking at replacing the swamp cooler with an A/C unit for the Service Hall (kitchen, laundry, etc.). He will need a bid for the replacement as well as a bid for the entire facilities A/C system since there is some concern that the current A/C system may be inadequate.
- c. The Salt Lake Veterans Home had a CMS look behind survey which sited them on the egress issue that's already been completed at this facility, so the SLC Home will be making those modifications in the near future.
- d. He also mentioned that the State Officer of the SLC Veterans Home will be retiring and the department will soon be looking for his replacement.
- e. Director Harter mentioned that he and Board Member Marck enjoyed the Honor Flight to Washington, DC in October and that it was a fantastic experience. 47 Veterans total and 9 from the St. George area were able to attend that event. Board Member Warner asked if there was going to be another Honor Flight to which Director Harter replied yes, a Vietnam focused Honor Flight was coming up soon and that the organization typically does 6-8 Honor Flights per year.
- f. He also mentioned that the Department was doing well and that they are getting ready for Veterans Day with all the many events on or around Veterans Day. He and other representatives try to attend as many events as possible. Other metrics for Utah Veterans include unemployment is below 3%, 8000 Veterans are enrolled in 122 Utah higher education institutions that accept the GI Bill. Board Member Holck asked if there was a cap to how much each state or institution could receive in VA education funding to which he replied no. She also asked if there was a time limit on using that benefit to which he replied that there are various chapters to the GI Bill, but generally a veteran has up to 15 years to use those benefits. She also asked if that benefit was transferrable to which he replied that yes, there is a period of time that a service member can transfer those benefits, but this was used as a retention tool and unless you already have initiated that transfer, you probably can't. He then referred any detailed questions to the

Veteran Services Officer, Courtney Pendleton, who can get answers to specific questions.

- g. Board Member Holck asked what the VA was doing to improve treatment of mental health issues for veterans to which Director Harter responded that Director Shulkin layed out his top 5 priorities when appointed and Suicide Prevention/Mental Health Treatment was one of those top 5. The VA has added mental health professionals here in Utah at the Hospital and CBOC's as well as a new Mental Health Counseling Center (or Vet Center) in Ogden. It has taken some time, but the VA increased its capacity to help with these problems. There is a Vet Center here in St. George and counseling services are available separate from the VA medical system. Additionally, the VA has performed additional studies to help target efforts and we have a working group in our department along with the VA, Utah National Guard, Hill AFB, and Utah's Department of Human Services to discuss mental wellness and focus efforts to help. He also is a commissioned member of Utah's Veterans and Military Affairs Commission to discuss issues with Utah's Legislature and this topic is frequently discussed to see if additional resources can be added to help. Chairman Dunne added that the Vet Center has a van that will travel to more remote communities of the state to provide additional opportunities for veterans to get help if needed.
6. Board Business Items:
- a. Chairman Dunne then asked for the status of the Honor Wall nominations. State Officer Moore directed the members to their packages that contain nominations for Marti Bigbie and Jack Reber. A brief synopsis of the two nomination packages was discussed and Board Member Marck motioned to accept both nominations seconded by Board Member McKenna which then passed unanimously. The awards will be presented in January, 2018.
 - b. Board Member Holck mentioned that the legislature bill H.B 381 contained many edits that were still visible and requested a clean copy of the bill. Director Harter stated that the Statute is what was needed to be distributed.
 - c. Board Member Holck stated that her husband had the idea to form a sub-committee to raise funds for a Liberty Bell, and possibly with some type of connected Wishing Well, to be placed in the Veterans Memorial Park. Board Member McKenna offered his support for the idea. Chairman Dunne stated that it might be difficult to fund a project like this and questioned the part about the Wishing Well. Deputy Director McFall added that there liability issues with having a well with water in it, but didn't think there would be a problem with having a dry well feature. Board Member McKenna stated that he would be willing to be a part of the sub-committee. State Officer Moore asked Board Member Holck if he could meet with her husband to discuss the way forward.
 - d. State Officer Moore stated that the standard design for a monument to be placed in the Veterans Memorial Park, per the blueprints, is estimated at around \$10,000.00 per monument. Those monuments include a granite slab with

engraving placed in a concrete and brick base. There is room for at least 7 monuments in the park and there are currently 4 monument bases already in the park.

7. Board Member McKenna made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Board Member Warner, and Chairman Dunne adjourned the meeting at 5:50 pm. Next Meetings tentatively to be held at 4:00 pm on:
 - a. 11 January, 2018
 - b. 12 April, 2018
 - c. 12 July, 2018